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CHRIST ALONE.

"I have trodden the wine-press alone."—ISAIAH lxiii. 3.

THE passages in connexion with the text present to our view a grand and glowing picture of a triumphant, glorious conqueror. The scenes of the battle, and the victory, are described with the vividness of dramatic interest and power. The whole, as some suppose, has a literal reference to the victories of Jehovah over his enemies in the land of Idumea; and he is represented as returning from the field of conflict, and complete conquest, in great majesty and might, covered with the blood of battle. As the grapes in the wine-press are crushed beneath the feet of him who treads it, and are unable to resist the pressure, so had the enemies of God been crushed by his strength, and in his fury.

These passages have also been thought to contain a prophecy concerning the future triumph of the Redeemer, in the destruction of anti-Christ, and the foes of his kingdom; and to refer to the same events that are spoken of in the book of Revelation, where the appearance of the conquering Saviour and his vengeance upon his enemies are alluded to in similar terms. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

But if we turn our attention to the work of Christ in the great plan of atoning mercy, we shall find that there was an object

to be accomplished, vast and glorious; a triumph to be achieved over obstacles difficult and stupendous; and in the mighty conflict with principalities and powers, that there was blood to be shed, and foes to be vanquished. And in this sublime enterprise of a world's redemption, we may not inappropriately apply the language of the prophet to the Son of God, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me."

The text has been selected as fitly describing the peculiar character of Jesus Christ as the only sacrifice for sin, and Saviour of sinners. No other person or being in the universe could occupy the place which he fills—no other could accomplish the work which he has wrought. Much of the prophet's language just quoted has a peculiar appropriateness to the Saviour's atoning work. He looked upon the fallen world, and there was none to help. And, in his sufferings and death, he trod the wine-press *alone*. There are several particulars, in reference to the work of redemption, in which the peculiar character and office of Christ are seen. Some of them let us consider. **CHRIST ALONE**—this is our theme.

1. He was alone in his *personal undertaking of the work of salvation*. It was God's purpose to make this sin-ruined world the theatre of divine communications and transactions, where should be displayed some of the brightest exhibitions of his benevolence, glory, and power. Here, where Satan had succeeded in alienating the human race from God, and bringing his wrath upon them, Jehovah determined to rear for himself a kingdom which should finally prevail against the foe, *that where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound*.

To remove the obstacles in the way of this difficult, but grand enterprise, and accomplish this glorious result, it was necessary that some one should undertake the execution of the work, who was adequate to meet all its exigencies. On whom shall the appointment fall? Where is the being qualified for the task? Who can pardon and rescue the guilty, and yet abridge not the claims of a broken law? Who can sustain the integrity of the Divine government, and yet cancel the rebel's transgression? Who can open the door, barred by Infinite Justice, and let the

prisoner go free? Who, though clothed with any one of the attributes of Jehovah, can effect the salvation of sinners? Mercy, heaven-descended, might pity and plead for them; but mercy could never atone for their guilt. Love, the very essence of Deity, might earnestly desire to redeem them from death, and lift them up into life and liberty; but Love cannot annihilate Justice. The guilty are *sinners* rightly condemned—the curse of that law, so glorious in its nature, so solemn in its sanctions, so awful in its penalty, and which they have violated, is resting, like the weight of eternity upon them. And that law, like its Divine Author, is unchangeable; it cannot be abridged or repealed. Who, then, is able to remove the difficulty—to vindicate the law—to satisfy justice, and yet pardon, and save the sinner? Can any one of the human race, the most virtuous and worthy of all, do this? Alas! such an one himself must perish unless that work be done for him! Unable to save himself, what can he do towards lifting a world up out of its condemnation! Is an *angel* adequate to the task? Angels are dependent beings. When they have done their utmost to serve and glorify God, in the spheres in which they move, they have only fulfilled their obligations to Him. They have no virtue to expend in atoning for the sins of others. They cannot save even one of the fallen spirits, that for their rebellion were expelled from heaven. How then can they work out the redemption of the world? They may earnestly desire to look into the great mystery of salvation, and to scan its wonders; but, being finite in wisdom and power, the work itself is beyond the scope of their apprehension, and infinitely exceeds the utmost reach of their ability. The birds sing their glad welcome to the life and loveliness of a vernal season; but they have no power to renew the face of the earth. So angelic spirits, those immortal birds of Paradise, may fill all heaven with joy when a sinner repents: but they never could produce the new creation over which they rejoice. Even God himself could not do this work in his absolute character, and without the mediatorial intervention of his Son. There was but one being in the universe who could render the world's salvation possible, and that was Jesus Christ. "Lo, I come," said he, "to do thy will, O God."

II. Christ was alone in the *Divine Incarnation*. This was essential to the work of redemption. In this appears its wonderful adaptation—its astonishing efficacy. "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Here we have a sub-

ject of infinite interest and importance. Here we are taught one of the most remarkable and marvelous truths contained in the whole compass of Revelation—the Incarnation of Deity—the coming of Christ into the world. This wonderful event stands by itself alone. Nowhere is there anything to correspond to it. Nothing in the universe is like it. Immanuel, God with us, becoming a helpless infant, and passing through all the stages of an earthly existence! Amazing fact! Mystery of mysteries! Jehovah-Jesus came into this world—

"From the highest throne of glory,
To the cross of deepest woe;
Came to ransom guilty creatures."

The Almighty and glorious Creator, by whom, and for whom are all things, made his abode with sinful men, in the humblest walks of life.

This is a solitary instance. No being from another world has ever done the like. None has come from a distant sphere to make earth his home. Angels, at different times, have visited our world. But their visits have been few and brief. They have never become inhabitants of this realm of sin. There is no record of one's ever being born, or having died on these mortal shores. We, sometimes, in our communings with God, in our thoughts and visions of heaven, in a solemn proximity to death, under the power of disease, or in the departure of a pious friend, seem to linger on the confines of another world; but we have not yet entered it, have not respired its air, nor experienced its reality. So unseen celestial messengers, feeling a deep and strange sympathy in our behalf, may be around us, and among us, but they are not of us; we are not bound to them by any ties of kindred. But God, the Redeemer, came nearer to us than they. He crossed the awful chasm that lay between the Divine and the human. "*He took on him the seed of Abraham,*" that he might grasp and encircle us with all the powerful sympathies of kindred and brotherhood. And O, what treasures, what gifts of life and love, of hope and immortality, he brought with him, and laid at our feet.

Great men have appeared in different ages and at distant epochs, who have shed upon the world the light of their genius, and changed by their deeds the current of its history. The heavens have opened at their glance, and in beautiful order, have gathered into constellations, spheres and systems. The earth, summoned and questioned by science, has revealed her laws and disclosed her treasures. And mind itself, acquiring new vigor from its investigations, has ventured on flights and made discoveries, not only astonishing in themselves, but to-day affecting all the interests of the world's civilization. Confucius, in wisdom towered above his countrymen like the princely oak in the forest. Socrates, rising superior to his age, seemed al-

most to break through into the region of Divine illumination. Calvin, in theological discrimination and statement, was an Alpine summit among his cotemporaries. Newton, grasping some of the simplest laws of nature, was borne aloft to a grand survey of the system of the universe. Washington, in defence of human right and freedom, and as an example of moral virtue, patriotic devotion and self-sacrifice, stands forth in unparalleled grandeur. Yet these, in all their greatness, were only men. They were of the earth, earthy. But when Jesus appeared, though "found in fashion as a man," he was in reality "the Lord from heaven." And how does all science pale before his revealings of life and immortality. When he spoke to man, what gleams of hope shot into the gloom of despair! He pointed to the skies, and disclosed a pathway leading to the glorious regions that lie beyond the stars! He planted the seeds of the great banyan tree of the Gospel, which shall take root in every land, and whose branches, bathed in the light and vocal with the music of heaven, shall overshadow the whole earth.

Many distinguished men have been born into the world; but only one God-man—Christ Jesus—has appeared. The Divine Incarnation is an event that stands by itself alone. And when we connect with that event its grand design, and contemplate our own relation to it, how does it rise in greatness and value, until we realize at length something of its infinite importance! Other events may engross the attention of the world, for a season; but this, in its bearings upon human salvation and approaching eternity, immeasurably surpasses them all. And its importance will increase. As earth fades away and its vanities recede—as life wanes into the shadow of death, and the world to come draws near—our relation to Christ, in the work of Redemption, wrought through the mystery of the Incarnation, will tower into an interest that overshadows every thing else. Eternity will not be too long to lament our folly, if we have not availed ourselves of the gift immortal which it offers, nor too long to utter our grateful rejoicings, if by it we have been made partakers of the Divine Nature.

"Dear Lord and Saviour! for thy gifts
The world were poor in thanks, though every soul
Were to do nought but breathe them, every blade
Of grass, and every atom of earth
To utter them like dew."

III. *In the purity of his life and the character of his ministrations*, Christ was alone. God and man, mysteriously united in the Incarnation, he lived here humble, obedient as a creature, yet exercising the authority and power of the Creator. As God, he was the Author and Promulgator of the Divine Law; as man, he recognized and obeyed to perfection all its requirements. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." In this

respect he was *alone*. Patriarchs and prophets under the former dispensation were not, nor have apostles and saints under the gospel, though eminent servants of God, and occupying by his appointment positions of great responsibility and usefulness, been free from imperfection and sin. Moses, with all his meekness and wisdom, sometimes erred in speech and action. David, a man after God's own heart though he was, experienced the bitterness of remorse and repentance for his fearful transgression. Paul and Barnabas, chosen apostles of our Lord, yet differing in a matter of comparative unimportance, separated from each other amid sharp contention. So imperfection in wisdom and action attaches more or less to all human beings, even the most godly and sagacious. It exists in the toil-worn, faithful missionary abroad, and in the simple-hearted disciple at home. It is found in the pulpit; it is not absent from the pew. Not so with Christ. No blemish was ever discovered in him. Not the slightest admixture of human infirmity marred the resplendent integrity of his character, or detracted from the completeness and glory of his perfect example. Amid all his temptations and conflicts, privations and sorrows—amid all the misrepresentation and insult, the calumny and cruelty, of which he was the subject—he never did a wrong act, indulged an evil thought, or contracted the least taint of impurity. O, what a treasure earth held—a Being of sinless perfection!

Look at his ministrations—his works of mercy and of might. In these he stands alone, excelling all who lived before him, and all who have come after him. Whether he opened his lips as a Teacher, or commanded a miracle, “never man spake like this man.” How great the number and variety of the mighty works he wrought—many of them recorded, or only hinted at in the narratives of his life. He controlled the elements of nature—restored to life the dead and buried—exercised dominion over evil spirits—cured, instantaneously, diseases. Wherever he went, he scattered mercy and blessing, life and salvation. The supernatural energy, the omnipotent power by which all this was accomplished, was not derived from another but was inherent in himself.

Though in the patriarchal and prophetic periods, and in apostolic times, the power of working miracles was, to a limited extent, bestowed, yet the recipients of that power always ascribed its source and efficiency to God. They were its appointed instrumentality; and it was often with apparent difficulty that the work was wrought. Not thus was it with the more stupendous miracles of Christ. “*He spake and it was done.*” Distance and difficulty hindered him not. The nobleman's son, five leagues away, was suddenly healed by a word. One leper is cured by a touch and ten others by an exercise of will. Not with such ease did Elijah bring the rain from heaven, or restore the dead child to life. The wonderful works of Christ are more perfect

and sublime than any ever performed by others. A hundred men with twenty loaves are fed by Elisha; but Jesus with five loaves feeds fifty hundred. They to whom superhuman power was delegated could only exercise it through some object of instrumentality. Moses accomplished his mighty deeds in Egypt with the rod which he bore with him; nor would the sea divide, without his stretching that wonderous staff over its surface. Nor would the bitterness of Marah become sweet, without his casting the tree into its waters. But Christ needed no instrumentality—no name foreign to himself. His word is Omnipotence. "*Be whole!*" and health returns; "*Arise!*" and the sleeping dead awakes; "*Come forth!*" and the tomb gives back its trust; "*Peace, be still!*" and the tumultuous billows are calmed. Death and the grave bore witness to his declaration: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*" The winds and the waves and the storm obeyed their God. The Apostles ascribed their miraculous power to Him. To the cripple at the Beautiful gate they said: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." But Christ said to those whom he healed: "*I will, be thou clean; Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee to come out of him;*" and to the dead son of the widow of Nain, "*Young man, I say unto thee, arise!*" Thus do the miracles of Christ surpass all others—establishing his Messiahship and Divine mission, and symbolizing the future triumphs of his gospel.

IV. *Christ was alone in his sufferings.* Suffering is the result of sin. It comes in consequence of the violation of God's moral law or the laws of our own physical constitution. Whoever sins against God, or against himself, *must* suffer. Jesus taught this when he charged the impotent man whom he had healed at Bethesda, saying, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." But the sufferings of the Saviour had no such origin as this. They were not the result of any sin which he had committed, of any law he had broken. Intense as they were, infinitely beyond all that mortal ever experienced, they were endured by a Being of spotless innocence. When he bowed under the agony of the garden, and prayed that, if it were possible, that cup might pass from him—the pains which he felt were not those of remorse. When his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—that bloody baptism of anguish overwhelmed him, not in consequence of any guilt of his own. It was the crushing weight of a world's iniquities whose awful pressure he sustained. It was the innocent suffering for the guilty, that the guilty might escape eternal condemnation and wrath. It was the Almighty Saviour, as a voluntary substitute for the sinner under the law, that He might be "the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth." "Truly, he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows"—treading the wine-press alone. In that dreadful, solitary hour, "On him was laid the iniquity of us all:"

"That he who gave man's breath might know
The very depths of human woe."

V. *Christ was alone in his death.* There has been but one Calvary—one cross of expiation—one vicarious victim—one expiring Saviour, whose blood is efficacious to atone for sin. The death of that Saviour stands out in the universe by itself in unparalleled sublimity and moral grandeur. That was the culminating point in the great work of atonement—the tremendous crisis where the hope of the world was centred and suspended. O what a scene for heaven and earth to witness! There stood the Saviour, firm to his purpose, bearing up the burden of a condemned and dying world. *"I have trodden the wine-press alone ; and of the people there was none with me."*

Martyrs have died for their faith—patriots have sacrificed their lives for their country—but there has been no death in our world like that of Christ. Were it possible for man to give a thousand lives, *"none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."* *"But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Benefits sometimes accrue to others when men die. The monarch of an empire, the chief magistrate of a nation, being removed by death, another succeeds to his honors. When a man of wealth dies, his children come into the possession of a fortune. But there is no moral virtue in the death of any human being. When the King of Israel wept over his fallen son and poured forth the touching lamentation, *"Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom,"* had he been permitted to do so, he could not have saved the soul of his beloved, but rebellious boy. What were the benefits resulting from the death of Christ? That death opened the door for the salvation of a world. It was that which bridged the awful gulph that hopelessly separated man from God—earth from heaven. In that death, Justice and Forgiveness mingled and blended—"Mercy and Truth met together—Righteousness and Peace kissed each other." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," through the efficacy of that atoning sacrifice.

Jesus came into the world to die. That event was always before him. Never did he lose sight of it amid all his journeyings, all the exhibitions of his benevolence and power. He looked forward to the solemn scene ; he often alluded to it ; he desired its fulfilment. *"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?"* As he saw the event approaching—in all its dread and unutterable reality—he knew that he must endure it *alone*. He had always had a few sympathizing disciples and friends ; he had had the presence and aid of his Father ; but now, in the very darkest scene of his agony, he was to be left to himself. O, what were his emotions, when he uttered the words, *"Father, the hour is come !"*

As the terrible tragedy proceeded, where were his disciples? "Of the people there was none with me." As the weight of the world's guilt rested upon him in that dark and awful hour, why did he exclaim, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not his Father leave him to bear that weight alone, that his value, as a complete sacrifice and an Almighty Saviour, might be manifest both in severity and glory? *He trod the wine-press alone.* He came forth from that scene of struggle and conflict a triumphant victor—man's great enemy conquered, and the world in possession of a finished redemption. His garments were dyed with the blood of atonement. In his resurrection, he appeared "glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."

Where shall we find a parallel to all this? Has another such scene transpired, is another such fact lodged in any part of the universe? History! thou hoary chronicler of the past, unroll thy records, disclose their wonders, and search out all thou hast forgotten to write—and wilt thou find another event like this? Prophet! that gazest down the ages to come, and seest all that is glorious and marvellous in the future—say, is it there? Ye worlds that sweep the circle of the heavens, which of you has been the place where "*God was manifest in the flesh*?" Where, in all your realms, has a Saviour died? Feeling, perhaps, the influence of that death, restraining, saving, glorious—yet it transpired not with you! O earth, rebellious earth! how has Jehovah looked upon thee and visited thee, and made thy one and only Golgotha the centre of a system before which the stars in yonder canopy shall fade, and all material splendor vanish away!

VI. *Christ was alone in his intercessory and mediatorial work.* "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." When, after his humiliation, he ascended triumphant, he took our nature with him up to the throne of intercession, there as the God-man to mediate and plead in behalf of sinners. There is no other medium of access to God and heaven. The Jewish priesthood, having fulfilled its appointment, was abolished when Christ appeared. All its service and its ceremonials were superseded by the in-coming of a new dispensation, with its more excellent ministry, and wherein Jesus "is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." There is no priestly office on earth now; there are no sacerdotal grades and sacrifices akin to those of the Aaronic institution. The plea for their existence and the support they claim are, under the gospel, false in theory and without foundation in fact. They are derogatory to Christ, and an infringement on the method of salvation by grace. They detract from the value of the great sacrifice, and obstruct and involve the way to the Only Intercessor. Ministerial functions and religious ceremonies, founded on offices

and rites of the Jewish economy, are like the employment of an obsolete agency that has fulfilled its purpose, and been dismissed. It is as though a man, after his edifice was completed, should insist on retaining as a part of the building, the scaffolding, the ropes, and the ladders, which had once been needful and proper, but are now not only useless, but an incumbrance and a blemish. Now, the redeemed disciples of our Lord, wherever they are found, are "an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." They are to execute the commission and commands of the Head and Lawgiver of the Christian Church, and thus "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light." Christ himself is the High Priest of their profession, who is passed into the heavens, hath an unchangeable priesthood, and "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." No human being, whatever be his ecclesiastical titles or pretensions, can act for us as a mediator, or a bestower of pardon. No early rite or ceremony can effect our regeneration. No mere church *organization* or enclosure can invest us with the privileges of Christian discipleship. We must come directly and personally to Jesus, in penitence and faith, trusting alone in him, and resting all our hope on his atoning sacrifice, or we cannot be accepted of God and saved. Man, conscious of his spiritual need, is ever prone to works of merit, to trust in ceremonies or to establish his own righteousness. This is seen in Pagan idolatries and Papal superstitions, and also in a religion that is formal or merely sentimental. "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" is a question that greeted the ears of Christ. His reply was characteristic. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." Simple faith in Jesus—heart-yielding submission to God through him—is the sinner's first, and chief duty; and, without this, whatever else he may do, heaven will be shut against him. The only mediator and intercessor hath said, "I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Apostles have added, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Such, brethren, is Christ our Lord and Saviour, in his alone undertaking the work of our redemption—in his incarnation, his life and deeds, his sufferings, his death, his intercession. In view of what has been said, I observe,

1. He is *the alone Saviour for us*. As sinners, included among the lost whom he came to seek and to save, when we see his adaptation to his great work, and realize our need, we cannot but feel that there is none but Christ. All our merits, works, hopes—what are they without Christ?

"Should my tears for ever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

What divine attributes, what infinite riches are his! What clustering excellencies, what unrivaled attractions centre in Him! "Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious"—the "chiefest among ten thousand—the one altogether lovely." He is our life, our hope, our joy. And we are complete in him, in whom all fulness dwells, and "who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He is all this to every believer in Him, whatever be his rank, wealth, or intelligence. To all he is the Alpha and Omega of their salvation. In gladness and gloom, in prosperity and adversity, in life and in death, here and hereafter, he is the all-sufficient and eternal portion of their souls. From every heart renewed, there goes up continually to Christ, the grateful and adoring aspiration: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

2. Without faith in Christ there is no salvation. A sinner out of Christ is a sinner lost. A world without the knowledge of Christ, is a world lying in darkness and the shadow of death. Whatever else a nation, a community, an individual, may have, if they have not Christ enthroned in the heart, and the principles of his gospel incorporated in the life, they are enemies to God, and heirs of hell. They may have intelligence, refinement, and wealth—may have splendid churches and gorgeous ceremonies—may hear and speak the name of Jesus,—but every soul that does not apprehend Him by faith, and personally submit to Him, to be his and do his will, has no part nor lot with him. Sinners are condemned—lost for ever—if they have not Jesus for their Saviour! What avail the forms of religion, if the power of godliness be absent? Of what value is a church that does not hold Christ as the only mediator and intercessor before God, and, through whom alone, sinners are pardoned? Of what benefit is a ministry that does not preach Christ as he is,—Christ first, Christ last, Christ always, *Christ alone*, as the apostles preached him? Contemplating this subject in all its high interest and importance, can we not sympathize with Paul, in his declaration to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle speaks of some who desired to make a fair show in the flesh, by conforming to existing rites not required by the gospel, and so avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. But Paul spurned everything like a worldly and fashionable religion. "God forbid," said he, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." There is nothing men need so much as the gospel of Christ—the cross

of Christ—a crucified Saviour. Salvation, the Bible, a hope in Jesus, are infinitely more important to them than physical improvements or intellectual advancement—than railroads, telegraphs, and all the gold of California and Australia. And this is our work and labor of love—to make known to men the truth as it is in Jesus; to follow humbly in the footsteps of our Master and preach the gospel to the poor, and to all to whom we may gain access. “The field is the world.” In our churches and the communities where we dwell—among the destitute in our land, and in far distant heathen nations and tribes—we may be workers together with God, sending the gospel to all, as he gives us ability. Providence is opening effectual doors, leading into vast fields where we may enter and sow the seed of the kingdom. Idolatry, error, and false religion will spread unless the gospel in its purity be diffused as the chief counter-acting and supplanting influence. And in this work of evangelization, there is a peculiar obligation resting on those who, in matters of religious belief and practice, reject all mere human authority, and, with a conscientious and unswerving regard for the teachings of Divine truth, acknowledge “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

3. How great the guilt of the rejecter of Christ! To despise such a Saviour, to trample upon such mercy, and turn from the pleadings of such love, as the gospel presents, must insure an awful doom. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy.” How aggravated then, will be the punishment of him who perishes under the gospel. Come, O sinner, to Christ! He has rendered your salvation possible—certain if you believe. As certain will be your ruin if you believe not. You must reap as you have sown.

4. How glorious the prospect of the believer in Jesus! They who have followed him in the regeneration, who have fellowship with his sufferings, who remember his commandments to do them, shall share in the infinite goodness of his grace and love. No blessing will be withheld. Nothing shall deprive them of his favor and their heavenly inheritance. All things are theirs—life, death—the present, the future. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Trusting in the Son of his love, he will surely do for us all we need. “God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Much more* then,” adds the apostle, “being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Great and precious are the Divine promises, full of encouragement and hope to the disciples of Jesus. God’s people are his heritage and care. They shall never be left without a comforter and guide. The Saviour has gone to prepare a place for them, and he will come again and receive them to himself. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.”

That day fast approaches. Its highest glory will consist not in the unparalleled scenes and events that will attend it—the vast and shining array of accompanying angels; the dazzling splendors of the great white throne; the sound of the archangel's trumpet exceeding loud, waking all the dead; the sublime exhibition of omnipotent power witnessed in the resurrection; the wrapping earth in a sheet of flame, and rolling the heavens together as a scroll—not in any or all these will the Son of God find his highest and peculiar honors; but rather in his ransomed people; for he will come *to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe!* We know much of Christ in this world. We are united to him by faith. His presence and blessing are with us, and our lives are hid with him in God. Still, we know but in part here—we see through a glass darkly. But the day cometh when we shall see face to face and know as we are known. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.” O, in that day, free from imperfection and sin, we shall see in the great propitiation new beauties and enrapturing glories. Our eyes will rest on new attractions at Bethlehem. Our undying interest in Gethsemane will grow deeper and more intense. Calvary will be surrounded by a more resplendent halo of glory. The Cross will furnish exhaustless lessons that we may study with increasing interest through the ages of eternity. The tomb where Jesus lay, and whence he rose triumphant, will shine as the gate of Paradise. And Olivet’s summit of ascension will be tipped with the golden sunlight of heaven. Though these places as literal localities will have passed away, yet in their spiritual significance, as connected with the great truths of our religion, they will remain forever; and, as we contemplate our interests associated therewith from the serene heights of immortality, all our admiration of their value and glory will centre in CHRIST ALONE.

SERMON DCIV.

BY REV. J. MANNING SHERWOOD.

BIBLE PREACHING.*

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 TIM. III. 16, 17.

It is an undeniable fact that the pulpit greatly sympathizes with and is powerfully affected by the peculiar type of the times in which it is called to exercise its ministrations. It is right and best that it should be so to a certain extent. There is profound philosophy as well as simple doctrine in the gospel; and he is the most effective preacher who knows how to wield that philosophy so as best to adapt and enforce the doctrine. There is a high sense in which the preacher must be a *man of the times*, to make his influence felt. But there is danger, extreme danger, lest the pulpit, instead of controlling and moulding the age to the true type of the gospel, suffer itself to be swayed by and conformed to the age. And this would be fatal to its power and success. The preacher who is only a man of the times—who bodies forth in his ministry only the popular sentiment and type of life—is not a preacher who wins souls to Christ. The gospel in all its facts and doctrines, is one and the same in all ages. One spirit animates it—one life pervades it all. And no ministry is or can be effective which fails to set forth that gospel in its essential facts and doctrines, spirit and life. So long as the Bible remains the only Divinely inspired book, and so long as it shall please God by the foolishness of preaching to save sinners, so long must this ancient, and, in the judgment of not a few, *antiquated* book, be the one theme, one inspiration, one type and life of the Christian ministry. He is the wisest and most successful minister who so comprehends and is able to seize upon the public mind of his day—the peculiar phases of thought and life which characterize his times—as to infuse into the great mind and heart of the world most of the doctrine and life of the Divine Word.

THE KIND OF PREACHING NEEDED BY THE PRESENT AGE, is the subject I have chosen as appropriate to this occasion. I shall allow myself a considerable latitude in the discussion of it; and

* Preached at the ordination of Rev. Stephen G. Dodd, at Milford, Ct., Oct. 20, 1852.

I claim the right to express my views freely on the subject, even at the risk of being thought censorious and fault-finding.

1. *Is there not a great and growing deficiency in that kind of preaching which this age of the world imperatively demands?* I am among the number who believe, unpopular as the doctrine is in many quarters, that the evangelical Pulpit has undergone, and is now undergoing, a serious and important *change*—a change on the whole for the worse, and truly alarming. In many respects it has unquestionably *improved*. There is less stiffness and dryness; less regard shown for human authority; less of the technicality and formula of the schools. There is more freedom and directness and boldness: there is a truer philosophy in many quarters, and often a better theology: a more popular and therefore effective exhibition of truth: a new fraternizing of the ministry with the people, and of the gospel with the masses: a wider range of thought and of the principles of Christianity in their social relations. There is more unction, more learning and literature, a higher rhetoric and oratory in the Pulpit of the present day, probably, than in any previous age.

And yet, after admitting all this, and more, if you please, is it not true that the Pulpit has lost, and is daily losing, that *Scripture* character and *moral* power in which its real strength and saving efficiency mainly consist? There is more of human wisdom and might, but less of the simple word and power of God in it. What preaching has *gained* in the particulars I have named, has it not more than *lost* in Scriptural simplicity and plainness—in piety and spirituality—in a divine ambition and unction; in that straightforward, honest, earnest dealing with sinners' consciences, which characterized the preaching of a past generation? A worldly ambition has crept into the pulpit to a fearful extent; mere talent is worshipped. The pride of learning and genius, the pride of science and philosophy, and the pride of popular oratory is rampant: There is an effort at greatness, a straining at originality, a showy ambitious rhetoric, a display of human parts and accomplishments, in sad keeping with the spirit and end of the gospel. There is, it cannot be denied, a great, a growing, and an alarming deficiency in that preaching which is a simple exhibition of God's Word. It is only necessary for a man of intelligence to put himself in a favorable position to observe and mark the flow of the popular current on this subject, especially as it is seen in our great cities and centres of influence, to see and feel the truth of this remark.

Compare the *published sermons* of the present day with the sermons of the old divines, and what a contrast! There is more of the spirit and power of the Bible in a single volume of Luther, or Baxter, or Edwards, than in a hundred of our day.

Let any one examine the twenty-six volumes of the "*American National Preacher*." Here are about seven hundred sermons from distinguished ministers of the various evangelical denominations in this country, which may be taken as a fair exhibition of the American Pulpit for more than a quarter of a century. One thing will strike the mind with painful surprise, on a careful examination of the work, viz., the manifest falling off in what may be called Bible preaching. The "Preacher" holds its own, it may be, as to talent, learning, literature, accomplishment—in all that constitutes the intellectual and the esthetic—but, alas! in deep piety and spirituality, in an earnest pleading with sinners, in moral power, as to the marrow and fatness of the gospel, one is constrained to say, "O the leanness, the leanness!" It does one's soul good to read the sermons in the earlier volumes from the pens of Mason, Green, Griffin, Alexander, Beecher, Rice, Skinner, Woods, Porter, Hyde, Dickinson, Spring, Humphrey, Fiske, Clarke, and Miller, and others like them, who then gave tone and power to our pulpit. There is an affluence of Scripture thought, language and illustration, a depth of Christian experience, a divine unction, a power of appeal, a grappling with the conscience, a masterly exhibition and application of the simple Word of God, that will move any man and stir the soul within him. And the successive *Conductors* of that highly useful work all complain of the difficulty of getting sermons of a Scriptural or practical character. While it were easy to obtain what are termed in the popular language of the times, "talented" sermons, "brilliant" sermons, "original" sermons, "learned and elaborate" sermons, "finished and polished" sermons, in any quantity, it is almost impossible to draw forth sermons so imbued with the spirit and power of the Bible as to be likely to convert souls, and feed and nourish a Scripture piety in the church. Either such sermons are not commonly preached now a days, or their authors have no confidence in them, and are ashamed to print them. There are some *noble exceptions* to this remark, and, what is a significant fact, they belong mainly to the *older* portion of the ministry. The change I speak of is more marked and common among our *younger* brethren, showing a serious defect either in their theological training, or in the models after which their pulpit taste and style have been formed.

Not long since, a godly and able minister said to a brother, "O that my pastor would give us something beside pretty flowers, and brilliant periods, and intellectual treats, and lofty flights of eloquence; my soul is famishing for the bread of life—I long for something simple, nourishing, substantial." And yet that pastor occupies a very distinguished place among our younger preachers, and is the model after which not a few of them are seeking to form their own preaching.

This class of facts, and I apprehend the observation of you all will confirm and add to it, goes to show that there is a

lamentable deficiency in that kind of preaching which commends itself to men's consciences, and which alone God honors in the salvation of souls. God has never honored *mere* talent and learning and rhetoric and logic and accomplishment—however distinguished, in his ministers. "*Not by might*" of human strength and display, "*nor by power*" of worldly wisdom and gifts, "*but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.*" The most gifted and popular ministry may be utterly barren of the "fruits of the Spirit." And are we not cursed with a curse—are not revivals of religion growing less and less frequent and general—are not pride and ambition and worldliness and the love of display and the spirit of unholy rivalry and dissension, creeping into the ministry and into all our churches, as, in part at least, the result of the deficiency here complained of? Is not this one of the main causes of that sad declension of religion over which we are called to mourn? May not this be the reason why the evangelical Pulpit of our day has so little power with the world?

I do know that there are not a few laymen in our churches, and, among the number, many distinguished for their intelligence, standing and worth, who grieve over this defect, and feel and do not hesitate to declare that the popular style of preaching is not to their taste; does not profit them; and who long for a more simple preaching of the Word of God. *Daniel Webster* expressed the feelings of thousands like him, in the church and out of it, when he said, in a criticism on a learned and able discourse to which he had listened, "If clergymen in our day would return to the simplicity of the gospel, and preach more to individuals and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many of the ministers of the present day take their text from St. Paul and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the gospel, saying, 'You are mortal; your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. You are immortal too. You are hastening to the bar of God; the Judge standeth before the door.' When I am thus admonished, I have no disposition to muse or to sleep." The rebuke is deserved; would that we all might heed and profit by it!

It were not difficult to account for the change which has come over the pulpit in our day; the fault is in the *times* more than in the ministry. We live in a *new* age of the world. Twenty-five years have given birth to immense changes. We are flooded with new ideas. The boundaries of knowledge are greatly enlarged. A powerful impulse has been given to the human mind. Mankind have cut loose from old notions. New tastes and habits and forms of life have come into being. The sober and the real, the contemplative, the substantial and the supernatural, are displaced by the ideal, the excitable, the impulsive,

the showy, the fanciful, the natural and sensual. The life of man as a social being and a creature of earthly instincts and interests and duties, has been immensely quickened and augmented. And it is not wonderful in such a day, that God's own Book of moral and eternal truths, unchangeable, supernatural, and spiritual from their very nature—bodied forth to man in the language and forms of ancient modes of thought and life, and appealing only to the inner soul of man, should in a measure be despised and neglected. It is not strange that the *ministry*, seeing this, and themselves experiencing the baptism of this new dispensation, should often essay to fight this modern Goliath of awakened thought, of social change, of intellectual error, or religious indifference, with "*carnal weapons*"—the weapons of human wisdom and might—instead of "the simple sling and stones" out of the brook. But depend upon it, my brethren, we cannot cope successfully with the present race of giants with their own weapons. We cannot, in our calling, measure our strength with the world and prosper. Time was when learning and science and the arts and oratory were confined to the sanctuary, almost to the ministry. Then they were means of influence and of ascendancy. But that day is past, and a new order of things exists. We can no longer excel in these things. We cannot cope with the professor's chair, with the lecture-room, with the secular press, even on this field. We have not the time nor the opportunity for it. We must arm ourselves with *other* weapons or we shall certainly lose ground. Our strength and sufficiency are in God alone, and in his inspired Word. Our lever is a *moral* one, having its fulcrum deep down in the human conscience; and the only effectual power we can apply to that lever is the simple authoritative Word of the living God. If ever there was an age of the world that demanded to have the voice of God, speaking to man in the Volume of inspiration, sounded out with clearness and with emphasis—an age demanding simple faith in God's all-sufficiency, in the power of supernatural Truth, eminent holiness and a special baptism of the Holy Ghost, in those who exercise the Gospel Ministry, that age is certainly the present.

II. I have already more than hinted at the kind of preaching demanded by the times. I mean what may be distinctively called **BIBLE PREACHING**. If asked to define this term I might be unable to do it definitely and precisely. I mean more by it than simple exposition or the use of scripture language, or doctrinal preaching. Four remarks will pretty clearly indicate what I understand by Bible Preaching.

1. *The Holy Scriptures must obviously UNDERLIE all our teaching.* They are the sole basis of our ministry. They are the substratum, and they are to furnish the entire subject matter of our sermons. We are not at liberty to go beyond the record—

to introduce topics foreign to it—or to launch out into the wide and uncertain field of speculation. We are to ground every sermon upon the plain import of God's revealed Word. God has put his own inspired Scriptures into our hands "which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus;" and it is our simple duty to explain, defend and enforce the teachings of these Divine Scriptures. And this foundation certainly is broad enough, and the topics and materials which the Scriptures furnish are varied and ample enough to occupy fully and exhaust the most capacious and well-furnished mind, so that we are without excuse in neglecting the Scriptures.

All this I suppose is readily admitted. And yet how much of the preaching of the day will not bear this test. How many sermons are preached that are entirely independent of the Bible in their cast and spirit, language and reasoning. Topics are introduced into the pulpit—matters of mere opinion and speculation are discussed—fields of thought and inquiry are traversed—well enough in their place, but as foreign to the main scope of the Scriptures and the salvation of sinners, as if Shakspeare, or Coleridge, or La Place were the text-book! Such preaching may attract admiring crowds, but it will not carry home conviction to the hearts of sinners and convert them from the error of their ways.

2. *The Bible must be our decisive AUTHORITY in all our teaching.* And that authority must be constantly acknowledged, made prominent, and appealed to as the sole warrant and power of our ministry. All the independent opinions and reasonings of men have but little weight in matters of religion. One text of Scripture directly to the point, is worth more than volumes of traditions, commentaries, speculations however learned and ingenious, and authorities. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "To the law and the testimony;" if they are not made to bear out clearly our teaching—made the high court of appeal in all matters of doctrine and duty—if we do not show perfect *confidence* in the Bible and make the simple authority of God the right arm of our strength, our ministry will be essentially wanting; it will fail to convict and convert men.

The Bible, remember, *assumes* many things; and its simple statement of facts, doctrines and duties not only authoritatively settles the points involved which claim our attention, but after we have tried upon them all our ingenuity, learning and philosophy, we shall be no wiser than God's own Word makes us. How much preaching is thrown away, which, not satisfied with a "thus saith the Lord,"—with receiving the truth as matter of faith from the Word of God—seeks to reason it all out and make it matter of intellectual demonstration! I do believe that preaching loses immensely by coming down from the high vantage-ground of *inspired truth* to deal with the Bible much as we

would deal with any other book. It is wonderful how the heart of man responds to the simple Word of God—responds though that word be mainly a matter of faith and of conscience; and nothing can compensate for keeping that word in the background, or making it subordinate.

This is one of the *essential* elements of Bible preaching; and yet undeniably much of the preaching of the times is lamentably wanting in it. I fear there is a wide-spread and growing deficiency just on this fundamental point. How much of it is attributable to lax views in regard to the *inspiration of all Scripture*—or to the introduction of *German* theology and literature into our country—or to a desire to adapt preaching to the peculiar spirit and genius of the age—I am not able to say. What a decided and extensive *change* has come over the pulpit in this respect during a single generation, must be apparent to all who have had any opportunity for observing. The *spirit* if not the principles of *Rationalism* and *Naturalism* is fast gaining ground among us. What is meant by this remark is simply a tendency to look at man and the system of salvation from other stand-points than the stand-point of divinely inspired and revealed truth. It was among the very last services which *Professor Stuart* rendered to the church to pen a most emphatic and solemn warning to his brethren on this very point. Never more than now was there wanted a ministry rooted and grounded in their convictions of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and disposed to honor and insist upon the authority of the Scriptures as absolute and sufficient, and above suspicion.

3. *Bible preaching* must of course be the *preaching of the Bible itself*. Not only must the Bible be the *groundwork* of it, and the *authority* to enforce it, but the *staple* of it also, the sum and substance of it. Our simple business is to unfold and vindicate, enforce and apply the meaning or truths of the *Bible*. We are to set forth the facts, doctrines, principles, and life of the Divine Word, in all their fulness, and seek to give them their practical effect in their varied relations. In doing this we may use our own language or Bible language—adopt the topical or textual mode of preaching—the expository or sermonio form—preach from one text or ten—follow the order of books, or go as judgment and the Spirit of God may guide us. All this relates to the manner and is subordinate. The great thing is to get the meaning, the teaching, and the spirit of God's own Book fairly and forcibly before the minds, and into the hearts, and down upon the consciences of our hearers.

No one it is supposed really doubts this. And yet, brethren, it is no easy thing to preach thus;—it is not the popular way of preaching in these times. The pressure of great and manifold temptations is constantly upon us to preach quite “another gospel”—a gospel of philosophy, and literature, and rhetoric—or a gospel of mere social reforms, and humanitarian notions, and

transcendental affinities—in order to meet the wants, or keep pace with the supposed progress of the age. Is it not an alarming fact that doctrinal, expository, and even textual preaching has well nigh ceased from our pulpits? The good old practice of quoting Scripture freely from the Pulpit has nearly passed away. There are more frequent quotations from the Poets and the Classics in multitudes of modern sermons, than from the Law and the Prophets and the Gospels! Indeed such is the cast, the level, the genius of not a small portion of our present preaching that the plain and simple, the sober and matter-of-fact language and sentiment of the Bible, would be *quite out of place* in it—would be thought tame and common-place, and would offend fastidious ears. I do believe that the ministry of our day are greatly at fault here. I do fear, brethren, that we yield too much to the demands of this polite, fastidious, esthetic, and would-be-thought highly cultivated and philosophic age. I do think that our sermons have come to partake too much of the popular *Lecture*, and the *Essay* form, and that we need to come back to primitive models—to that preaching which is “eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures.” THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE, AND NOTHING BUT THE BIBLE—oh, if this were the motto of all who exercise the gospel ministry, the Bible would not so often fail to prove the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. But how many are mere philosophers, or lecturers, or essayists, or poetizers, or declaimers in the pulpit where Christ and his cross are the only fitting theme, and where the words of truth and soberness only become the dying lips which speak to dying souls. The late Dr. ERSKINE MASON—himself with all his erudition and his philosophic mind a beautiful exemplification of the sentiment, once made this pregnant and instructive remark: “Brethren, be as much of the *philosopher* as you please in your *study*, but in the *pulpit* never.”

4. Finally, Bible preaching must embrace the exhibition of *the spirit and divine life of the Scriptures*. The letter killeth, while the spirit maketh alive. Not only must our preaching be grounded in the Scriptures, and enforced by their authority, and fairly drawn from them, but it must take its peculiar inspiration and moral character from them. A man must himself drink into the spirit of the Bible—enter its inmost sanctuary—understand it both experimentally and critically and have his intellectual and spiritual being in the Bible—must experience the power of God in his soul, and know the positive experimental side of Christianity—he must love to study and pry into the Bible, and dwell in that world of spiritual light and wonders, before he can truly and effectively *preach* the Bible. And the more intelligent piety there is in the preacher—the more familiar he is with the inner life of the Scriptures—and the more he comes under the baptism of that same Holy Spirit which indites and dwells in the Word, the more truly and powerfully will he be likely to preach it.

And here again, I am constrained to believe, there is a manifest deficiency extensively and increasingly prevalent in the ministry. While the labors of modern scholars have shed much new and important light on the literature of the Bible, and secured, in some instances, a better rendering and interpretation of the text, still, I think it will be admitted, that there is a sad declension of the *evangelical spirit*, a loss in the items of real piety and experimental preaching. The Pulpit of our times—times, too, demanding *eminent* spirituality and holiness in the ministry—is far from being as thoroughly evangelical, as decided and deep-toned in its piety, as spiritual and experimental in its ministrations, or as fully imbued with the life-giving spirit of a positive Christianity and of the Holy Ghost, as it should be! This is doubtless our great deficiency and besetting sin. We have not enough of the spirit of Christ and of Paul for such evil times as these.

This is our idea of Bible preaching. The Bible, as God's inspired and supernatural revelation, must *underlie* it, must give *authority* to it, must be the *theme* and *matter* of it, must give *inspiration* and *power* to it. Preaching must be of this kind, and every sermon after this model, or it is not Bible preaching, or a gospel sermon, whatever else it may be.

It were not difficult to name *examples* of such a stamp of preaching. From the specimens we have of *Christ's* preaching, it was eminently characterized by the qualities which have been named. He preached strait at the hearts and consciences of his hearers, in language, simple, pointed, and authoritative. He aimed to impress them with the fact of their individual responsibility to God—to convict them of sin, and make them tremble in view of it, and of a coming judgment. So *Peter* preached on the day of Pentecost. Every word of that famous sermon was like a barbed arrow to pierce and rankle in the conscience. So *Paul* preached. Profoundly erudite and accomplished as he was, he would know nothing at Jerusalem, or Rome, or Athens, or Corinth, or Antioch, but "Christ, and him crucified." We all know how *Baxter* preached, and what it was that made his preaching so powerful. It was his plain, honest, fearless, direct, faithful, intense application of God's own authoritative Word to men's consciences. Look, too, at the sermons of the great *Edwards*. It was not his masterly metaphysics, his profound philosophy, his intellectual demonstrations, or his parade of learning, that made him such a giant in the pulpit;—there is a singular absence of these in his sermons. But he got strait down upon the sinner's conscience, and there dealt his earnest blows with almost superhuman effect. In his sermon on the *Judgment Day*, we are told, that he so impressed upon his hearers the sense of personal guilt and interest in its decisions that when he closed, they actually looked up in terror

to see if the heavens were not actually rending, and the incensed God descending to take vengeance on his enemies. That famous sermon of his which produced such an overwhelming effect at the time of its delivery—"Sinners in the hands of an angry God"—what is there in it but the simple unfolding of Scripture truth on that awful subject, and a direct, solemn, pungent, and intensely energetic application of it to his immediate hearers? O, for the day when *such* preaching shall again thunder from our pulpits, causing sinners in Zion to be afraid, and waking the slumbering conscience of a guilty world!

Let me, my brother, commend to you such models. Let your ministry be thoroughly pervaded and imbued with the light and spirit of the Bible. Make the Bible, not only your text-book, but the staple and the inspiration of all your sermons. Honor it, and God will honor your ministry. Baptize your soul with the spirit of it, and God will baptize your teaching with the Holy Ghost.

The Bible is a wonderful book. There is nothing like it in the world. It is full of the great thoughts of God. It is crowded with topics of infinite interest and importance to mankind. All here is *Truth*, certain, revealed, inspired Truth. Here are all the elements of greatness, of moral influence and power. Your business is with this Book alone. God puts this Book into your hands with the solemn charge to preach it, and, so to preach it, that you shall not be guilty of the blood of souls. It is responsible business, a fearful charge, this ministry which you take upon you to-day. Hundreds of souls, guilty and immortal, will hang on your lips from Sabbath to Sabbath. Your ministry will be one of life or death eternal to not a few. Every Sabbath you are to stand forth and proclaim those great and weighty truths which are herein set forth. And quickly you will stand with the people who this day open their hearts and arms to receive you as their minister, at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Resolve, brother, to be a *Bible* preacher. Take your stand on the high vantage-ground of the Bible, and never come down from it. Thence survey the field of your labor, your work, your account, your reward. Look upon your hearers in the light of its affecting truths. Aim steadily and constantly at the saving of souls; no inferior end is worth the toils and sacrifices of the ministry. Fill your sermons with the facts, the doctrines, the principles, the examples of this blessed book, clearly set forth, and earnestly and prayerfully enforced, and your ministry here will be full of glorious results. Admiring crowds may not gather to it—the land may not ring with the fame of it—but, what is infinitely better, the sigh of the awakened, the cry of the anxious, the tear of the penitent, and the song of the convert shall be your reward.

And this is the kind of ministry, my friends, which you ought

to desire and pray for. If it be not so popular with the age and the multitude as some other, it is the only kind of ministry that is worth the having. You need to be instructed, warned, and admonished out of the Scriptures. You need to hear the voice of God your Maker and Sovereign and Redeemer and Judge, sounding out from his Word every Sabbath, clear, emphatic, and authoritative. You do not want to be amused or entertained, but converted, sanctified, and saved—taught how to live and to die. Be satisfied with a Bible ministry and with nothing else. Desire it above riches, above all earthly rewards. Let your minister see that you appreciate a ministry in full sympathy with the Bible, in its aims, spirit, and teachings.

GOD'S PRUNING-HOOKS.

Another of God's instruments of purgation is *providential trials*. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." These chastisements may come in the shape of persecutions, or bodily sufferings, or mental anguish, or loss of property, or disappointment as to worldly prospects, or sickness and death of dear friends, or the ill-doings of near connections, or in some other way. No matter what is the form or shape of the pruning-hook. It is just as the Good Husbandman has seen fit to make it, and just the shape that is suited to our particular case. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and therefore will not prune the wrong branch. It often seems to short-sighted mortals, that the Lord sometimes makes mistakes, in using his pruning-hooks. We would hold back his hand, and ask, "Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?" The branch seems so stripped of its foliage that we are ready to say, "It cannot survive such severe pruning." But as we look back upon branches, which were thus pruned in old times, we find that they did survive. They not only survived, but were the more flourishing and fruitful in consequence of their having been thus dealt with. This was the case with the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job and Moses. This was the case with all the pious prophets and kings. "One of them says, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'" "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." The apostles found it good to suffer affliction. One of them speaks thus, "Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In God's wise arrangement, it is "through much tribulation" that true Christians enter the kingdom of heaven.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*